

Topical Reports

I. Trans-Pacific Contacts

GORDON F. EKHOLM

The rather complete skepticism among Americanists, of only a few years ago, is now giving way to a real and growing interest in the various problems involved in trans-Pacific contacts. From work in progress known to this reviewer and the interest noted at Americanist congresses and among students at several universities, we may expect in future more reports on our subject and an increase in their size.

American archæologists, in the United States at least, still hold that the reality of trans-Pacific contacts has to be proved in more concrete terms than has yet been done before it can be taken seriously. Absolute proof may not suddenly appear; a shift from the traditional idea of New World independence will come as evidence is gradually accumulated. The tide will turn not only with new discoveries, but also through a revaluation of evidence already in hand and a change in our view on how long distance diffusion took place in the past.

This prediction, admittedly, may prove incorrect; however, the climate of opinion is changing in a way which will allow and encourage the varied kinds of studies which we need to test our hypothesis. We should look especially for studies of specific subjects in greater depth. For instance, certain musical instruments of Melanesia and Peru have been repeatedly found to be similar in construction and use, but the potential value of this observation awaits a fuller and detailed investigation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

CASO, ALFONSO

- 1962 Relaciones entre el Viejo y el Nuevo Mundo, una Observación Metodológica, *Cuadernos Americanos*, 21(6): 160-175. Mexico.

All attempts to prove trans-Pacific contacts by similarities in designs and art motifs are strongly criticized. It is claimed that agriculture as well as writing and the calendar were well founded in the Americas long before maritime contact can be postulated, so any contact that did occur was of no significance. It is a statement by a well-known Americanist who believes in the completely autochthonous development of the American civilizations.

ESTRADA, EMILIO, MEGGERS, BETTY J. and EVANS, CLIFFORD

- 1962 Possible transpacific contact on the coast of Ecuador, *Science*, 135(Feb. 2): 371-372.

The Early Valdivia culture of coastal Ecuador, dated 2500 B.C., is one of the earliest occurrences of pottery in the New World. This pottery shares several features of form and decoration with pottery of the Middle and Late Jōmon period of Japan, and it is suggested that these similarities may have come about through maritime contact with Ecuador. This is an important and promising discovery.

FRASER, DOUGLAS

- 1962 *Primitive Art*. Doubleday and Company, New York.

To a far greater extent than other art historians of the United States, who have dealt with the art of primitive peoples and early civilizations, Fraser emphasizes historical relationships between areas. Though a general summary of the art of Africa, Oceania, and America, it contains a number of suggestions and ideas of interest to the subject of trans-Pacific contacts and influences.

HEYERDAHL, THOR

- 1962 Merrill's reappraisal of ethnobotanical evidence for prehistoric contact between South America and Polynesia, *Akten des 34 Internationalen Amerikanistenkongresses*, Wien, 1960: 789-795.

A discussion of Merrill's last book in which he concludes that contacts between Polynesia and the Americas must have occurred to account for the transfer of certain important food plants.

- 1963 Feasible ocean routes to and from the Americas in Pre-Columbian times, *American Antiquity*, 28(4): 482-488.

An excellent discussion of the importance of ocean currents as determinants of the feasibility and direction of sea voyages in ancient times. It recalls that circle routes are often shorter than those we may plot on a flat map and that currents are important to slow moving craft. The north Pacific is the only really feasible route from the Orient to the Americas, while other routes north and south of the equator allow movements in the other direction.

JONKER, F. P.

- 1962 Heyerdahl's Kon-Tiki theory and its relation to ethnobotany, *Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution*, 535-550.

A careful review by a botanist of the evidence and theories concerning the history of cultivated plants in the eastern Pacific. No new materials are presented, but it is a helpful introduction to a difficult and tricky subject.

LING SHUN-SHENG

- 1956 *Patu* found in Taiwan and other East Asiatic regions and its parallels in Oceania and America, *BDAA*, 71: 82-104 (English translation).

The distinctive club form known as *patu*, which has been extensively studied as a possible link between the cultures of Oceania and the Americas, is shown to occur also in Taiwan and mainland Asia. The author thinks that this area is its home and that it spread to the north to Northwest America as well as eastward through the Pacific.

- 1962 Stone bark cloth beaters of South China, Southeast Asia and Central America, *BIEAS*, 13: 195-212.

The distribution of stone beaters indicates that the bark-cloth industry probably had its origin in East and South China and eventually diffused to Africa and to Central and South America. Many data are presented in support of this hypothesis.

MARSZEWSKI, TOMASZ

- 1961 Remarques sur l'état des recherches concernant les contacts entre les peuples de l'Asie et de l'Amérique précolombienne, *Folia Orientalia*, 1960, 2: 117-204. Krakow, Poland.

A general review of the problem of Asiatic influences in the New World, with extensive citation of the recent literature and discussion of the arguments pro and con.

MENGHIN, OSWALD F. A.

- 1962 Grundprobleme der Amerikanischen Urgeschichte, *Homo*, 13(1-2): 81-92. Berlin-Frankfort. A general discussion of research in New World culture history and the problems of Asiatic influences.

MILEWSKI, TADEUSZ

- 1960 Similarities between the Asiatic and American Indian languages, *International Journal of American Linguistics*, 26(4): 265-274.

Two similarities are discussed: the first is of similarities in structural forms between the Caucasian Japhitic languages and various languages in western North America and South America. The second concerns similarities in the formation of names, and some phonetic correspondences, in Sanskrit and Aztec. Though the author does not insist that these are due to trans-Pacific contacts, they are of interest nevertheless to our subject.

NACHTIGALL, HORST VON

- 1960 Zur Entstehung der Amerikanischen Hochkulturen, *Peideuma*, 7(3): 151-172. The early American civilizations are considered to be linked with the megalithic complex of Eurasia.

NAUDOU, JEAN

- 1962 A propos d'un éventuel emprunt de l'art Maya aux arts de l'Inde Extérieure, *Akten des 34, Internationalen Amerikanistenkongresses*, Wien, 1960: 340-347.

The lotus panels from Chichen Itza, Yucatan, are compared in some detail with those of India and Southeast Asia. The complex of various elements that occurs in both places is considered to be proof of relationship although the exact place or origin in Asia is uncertain.

OBAYASHI TARYŌ

1960 On the origin of the *Inau* cult-sticks of the Ainu, *The Japanese Journal of Ethnology, Minzokugaku-Kenkyu*, 24(4): 1-30. (In Japanese with English Summary)

Cult sticks or poles, which are variously considered as the loci of gods or as mediators with the supernatural, are found widely distributed in northern Eurasia and into North America. It is thought to be an old trait diffused by the ancient hunting cultures.